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IN THE SENATE OF THE UNITED STATES.

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MAY 8, 1896.—Referred to the Committee on Agriculture and Forestry and ordered to be printed.

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The VICE-PRESIDENT presented the following

**LETTER FROM THE SECRETARY OF AGRICULTURE IN RESPONSE TO SENATE RESOLUTION OF APRIL 7, 1896, DIRECTING THE SECRETARY OF AGRICULTURE "TO IMMEDIATELY COMMUNICATE TO THE SENATE THE REASONS FOR THE DELAY IN SUPPLYING SEEDS FOR DISTRIBUTION."**

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UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE,  
OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY,  
*Washington, D. C., May 8, 1896.*

Sir: In pursuance of the resolution of the Senate of the United States of the 7th instant, directing the Secretary of Agriculture "to immediately communicate to the Senate the reasons for the delay in supplying seeds for distribution," I have the honor to submit the following statement:

The joint resolution of the Senate and House of Representatives authorizing and directing the Secretary of Agriculture "to purchase and distribute valuable seeds for the year 1896, as has been done in preceding years," took effect on March 14.

The Department of Agriculture proceeded immediately to prepare lists of vegetable and flower seeds for distribution, secure prices, and establish standards of purity and germination, and made a contract for 10,125,000 papers of vegetable seed on March 31. It made a contract for 1,000,000 papers of flower seed on April 1. In making these contracts due consideration was given to the ability of the contractors to fill their contracts with the greatest speed possible.

The contracts as at first drawn provided that the quota of vegetable seed for each Congressman should be put up in 1,000 mail packages and the quota of flower seed in 92 mail packages. When this was communicated to Congressmen, a strong desire was expressed that these mail packages be divided into three parts. In accordance with an expressed request to this effect the contracts were amended on April 6 so as to divide each quota of vegetable seed into 3,000 papers and each quota of flower seed into 280 papers. This necessitated the preparation of additional packets and a modification of the arrangements for packing the seed, which caused a slight delay.

The seed were collected and cleaned, the necessary facilities were provided, paper packets were made, printed, and filled, and the delivery of the seed by the contractors was begun on the the 25th of April. Up to 7 p. m. on the 7th of May the contractors for vegetable seed had

delivered to the mails 2,866,595 papers of vegetable seed. These have been divided, in accordance with the modified contract, into 181 quotas for Senators, Representatives, and Delegates, and have been forwarded in accordance with their orders.

In accordance with the law and the customs of the Department in previous years, the orders for the different districts have been filled, as far as possible, in the order of their latitude, beginning at the South. The average daily shipment of vegetable seed this week has been 20 Congressional quotas per day.

Up to the close of business May 7 the contractors for flower seed had prepared and delivered to the mails a total of 227,460 papers of seed, divided into 166 quotas, which have been sent out in the order in which the franks were forwarded. The contractor for flower seed is now delivering those seed at the rate of 43 quotas per day.

Considering these circumstances, it will be seen that there has been no avoidable delay in distributing the seed contracted for.

Respectfully submitted.

CHAS. W. DABNEY, Jr.,  
*Acting Secretary.*

THE PRESIDENT OF THE SENATE.

